



# Arkansas Department of Education

Johnny Key, Commissioner

*Transforming Arkansas to lead the nation in student-focused education*

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## **School Bus Drivers Report Increase in Number of Illegal Passes of Stopped School Buses**

**LITTLE ROCK** — Arkansas school bus drivers recently reported an alarming 884 instances of motorists illegally passing stopped school buses in one day.

A total of 3,896 school bus drivers representing 227 school districts participated in the yearly, one-day survey that occurred on April 24. This reflects an increase from April 2018, when 3,258 bus drivers representing 194 districts participated and reported 857 instances of illegal passes.

"I want to thank the bus drivers and school districts for participating in this year's survey," said Jerry Owens, senior transportation manager for the Arkansas Division of Public School Academic Facilities and Transportation. "Never before have we achieved almost 100 percent participation by districts. This indicates that our bus drivers and school districts are making school bus safety a priority and are expressing their concern about the high number of instances regarding illegal passes of stopped school buses. I believe motorists are becoming more aware of the law, but one instance is one too many. Let's all do our part to ensure our students arrive to and from school safely. Remember: Flashing Red. Kids Ahead."

During the April 24 morning and afternoon bus routes, bus drivers recorded the number of instances where motorists passed stopped school buses that had their red lights flashing. According to Act 166 of 2019, it is illegal for motorists to pass a stopped bus with its red lights flashing, as students are getting on and off the bus at that time. If convicted, the fines for doing so range from \$500 to \$2,500.

Of the 884 instances, survey results show that 491 instances occurred during the afternoon versus 393 in the morning. A total of 711 motorists passed from the front of the bus. While a small number, 12 frightening instances occurred where motorists passed on the right side of the bus where students enter and exit the bus. This is compared to 872 instances where motorists passed on the bus driver's left side.

"In almost every case, motorists who are travelling in the opposite direction of the bus also must stop when they see a stopped school bus with its red lights flashing," Owens said. "In these cases, students may need to cross the road in front of the bus to get to their destination."

The Arkansas Division of Public School Academic Facilities and Transportation conducts the survey each year at the request of the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation

Services. The survey results help both the national association and the state better determine the severity of the issue here in Arkansas and improve education and outreach efforts, such as Arkansas' Flashing Red. Kids Ahead. campaign.

To learn more about the Flashing Red. Kids Ahead. campaign, to find outreach resources, and to review transportation laws, visit <https://bit.ly/1Nlj2rK>.

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